

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent
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Press Contact: Gregg W. Bortz
610-861-9734 or (cell) 202-222-5118

Congressman Dent pledges support for bill to limit Indian gambling expansion

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) will continue his support for a bill that would significantly amend the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) to curb land grabs by Indian casino interests looking to expand their operations on non-tribal lands.

HR 4893, the Restricting Indian Gaming to Homeland of Tribes Act of 2006, was introduced by House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo. On a suspension vote Wednesday, the House voted 247-171 in favor of the bill. However, because the bill came to the floor under the suspension calendar, it needed a two-thirds vote of those present to pass. Congressman Dent expressed his support of putting the bill up for a floor vote, in which a simple majority is all that is needed to pass it.

This bill addresses specific concerns Congressman Dent raised when he introduced his own bill on the issue in 2005. Congressman Dent's bill was in response to a recent attempt by an Oklahoma-based tribe to claim land away from two dozen homeowners and businesses in Forks Township, Northampton County.

"Increasingly, groups anxious to promote casino gambling have been allying with some Native American groups with the sole purpose of utilizing IGRA to promote the establishment of casinos," Congressman Dent said. "HR 4893 would effectively end this kind of reservation shopping."

HR 4893 prohibits gambling on Indian lands outside of the State in which that tribe is primarily residing and exercising tribal authority as of the date of the law's enactment, unless those lands are contiguous to lands currently overseen and occupied by that tribe.

“This prevents a tribe with a headquarters in say, California or Oklahoma, from acquiring lands in places like Ohio, Illinois, and Pennsylvania—where there are no federally recognized Indian tribes—for the sole purpose of putting a casino on those properties,” Congressman Dent said. “Homeowners and business owners should not be held hostage to out-of-state casino interests that are willing to throw people out of their homes and destroy local businesses in order to further the expansion of casino gambling.”

Congressman Dent has written his colleagues to urge their “yes” vote and spoke on the House floor in support of its passage.

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